strength that in the last several decades of the dynasty China was not more frequently invaded.

Friction with the Japanese marked many of the later years of the Ming. In spite of the friendly relations earlier established with the Ashikaga Shoguns—the most powerful magnates in the Japan of the day—Japanese pirates persisted in ravaging the coasts of China, from Hainan northward, for the control of the Ashikaga was not effective over all the island realm. The raiders sacked even such important cities as Ningpo and Yangchow. Estrangement between China and Japan followed *(ca.* 1531) and commerce dwindled. The difficulties culminated in a determined Japanese attempt to invade and conquer China. The initiating and guiding mind in this venture was Hideyoshi, an able and vigorous soldier of lowly birth. In the period of internal turmoil which accompanied and followed the downfall of the Ashikaga, he had made himself master of the land. Japan pacified, he turned to the continent for further exploits. He asked the Koreans to allow his forces to pass through their territories, but was rebuffed. His armies thereupon invaded the peninsula (1592) and within a year had taken several of its principal centers. The Chinese dispatched troops to aid the Koreans. Their first contingent was small and was quickly repulsed, but a second, much larger, drove the Japanese southward, and Hideyoshi withdrew from the peninsula all but a few thousand men. Negotiations followed, but Hideyoshi abruptly and angrily terminated them when the Ming envoys, in what seemed to him an insultingly patronizing fashion, offered him investiture as a vassal prince. In 1597 he renewed the invasion of Korea. The following year a

Chinese army in the peninsula was decisively defeated and the noses and ears of the slaughtered enemy were sent to Kyoto, where the tumulus over them is still shown. Hideyoshfs death (1598) led to the Japanese withdrawal from the Korean adventure and that particular threat to the Ming disappeared.

THE RISE OF THE MANCHUS AND THE END OF THE MING

The reign under which the Japanese invasion occurred—usually known by its year title, Wan Li (1573-1620)—was the longest of the dynasty. Thanks to the vigor of an able minister, its first days were auspicious, but when this leadership was removed by